

Seattle City Council

Housing, Human Services, Health and Culture Committee Meeting

2 p.m. Wednesday, March 13th, 2013

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Jourdan Keith**

Today's poet is **Angela Jane Fountas**

Angela Jane Fountas started writing fiction while visiting her Greek grandmother in a village on the Peloponnese. She was twenty-seven. Since then, she has earned her MFA in creative writing and been a Richard Hugo House writer-in-residence and Jack Straw writer. Her work has been supported by Artist Trust, the Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs, and 4Culture.

Balloon Girl

by Angela Jane Fountas

There once was a girl with red birds nesting on her head. A balloon girl, a pretty girl. She wore a yellow dress. She was petite with dainty ankles above tiny feet. But between ankles and waist she rounded out, a complete circle, a ball. She floated over the earth, and bounced herself to sleep.

On rainy days, some of the birds circled her shoulders to keep her dry. On sunny days, she cast round shadows that made her sigh.

"What is inside the balloon?" the prince wondered, watching through his telescope. He longed to poke her with a stick.

"Was she born that way?" he asked his mother, but she shrugged. A queen doesn't know everything, he thought. "I want to play with her." And she was summoned to the castle.

Large blue eyes, a round red mouth, porcelain skin: she was translucent. But he could not see inside her skirt. He tricked her into dubious poses; she was clearly sealed.

"Tell me what's inside," he said, and the balloon girl shook her head.

"Pretty please," he pleaded. But she bounced ten miles away.

"No matter," he told himself. "Soon I will be king."

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Birds were born and perished, but the balloon girl was never want for warmth. Though her face aged, her frame remained the same. On her sixteenth birthday, the prince climbed upon his throne and drained his kingdom of every crumb. Berries wilted, no flower went to seed. He had made his decree.

One day, every single bird stopped searching and piled atop the girl's head. "Come and I will feed them," the former prince's message read. She arrived with a tremendous migraine.

"Sit here and wait," he pointed, closing the door to the room, which fit the chair she sat upon. She heard the key turn and knew she had been tricked. Crumbs rained from above, collecting on her skirt. One bird pecked after the next.

"No, please, don't," she cried, tears sliding down her cheeks, but the birds pecked and pecked and pecked until they were sated and she was drained of air.

The young king pushed the door open and said, surprised, "You're still alive." "Yes," she said, "but I am so unhappy."

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